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ABSTRACT

Because graduating high school seniors and college freshmen have difficulty writing persuasive arguments, elementary and secondary school writing curricula must teach students how to create a persuasive argument by producing evidence or support for their claims. One strategy for teaching persuasive writing that has proven to be successful is a mapping exercise using a wheel-shaped blank outline, which students fill in with main ideas and supporting information. Students begin by reading persuasive essays and mapping out their arguments, with main ideas forming the "hub" of the wheel outline and large supporting ideas forming the "spokes." Peripheral ideas then radiate from the spokes. After applying the technique to professional essays, students can use the wheel map to plan their own arguments. If they see that they lack supporting information to make up the wheel spokes, they continue to research their topic and acquire more. Students' maps can be copied for class examination and comment which focuses attention on the logical structure of the argument instead of surface errors. Because of their consistency, compositional maps foster internalization of assessment criteria. Additionally, maps are superior to revision checklists because they are visual rather than verbal, and because they distance and objectify problems which student writers are then able to resolve. Six pages of works cited are included. (JC)

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MAPPING ARGUMENTS: A SELF-MONITORING COMPOSING STRATEGY

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Two discrepant sets of findings raise some interesting questions. Writing researchers analyzing the persuasive discourse of college freshmen consistently find a lack of substantiation. However, discourse analysts studying the argumentative strategies of very young children find that the ability to offer reasons in justification of a claim is an early emerging skill.

Eisenberg and Garvey found that 3-year-olds knew that conflicts were resolved by offering reasons (168). Ervin-Tripp found that 4-year-olds gave explanations and justifications when persuading others: "they call on rights, norms, and reasons"(244). Newkirk and Atwell reproduce an Aristotelian enthymeme composed by a 5-year-old in invented spellings (195). Newkirk ("Archimedes") illustrates the early acquisition of persuasive competence in writing. Temple, Nathan, and Burris (180-184) show second-graders capable of composing arguments that invent reasons to refute possible objections by their audiences.

Since these proficiencies are nearly extinguished by the time students graduate from high school, what factors have led to their extinction? The National Assessment of

of Educational Progress (NAEP 1981) found that 78% of the 17-year-olds tested over a 10-year period (1969-79) failed to supply evidence for their assertions. Opinions were not defended with reasons. Interpretations were not justified with supporting data. The NAEP report recommended that students be taught how to find "evidence for judgments"(5).

Researchers analysing the argumentative essays of college freshmen also noted the absence of any substantiaation. Hillocks, at the University of Chicago, found that "student writing presented virtually no data"(3). Cooper and his colleagues at the University of Buffalo, found that "even the best writers faltered when asked to write persuasively"(43). They "lacked resources for elaborating and developing arguments"(43). "Stringing claims together does not an argument make---a writer needs to support those claims with data"(42).

In those states where persuasive writing tasks are used by colleges to determine placement, successful performance becomes a crucial issue for students. When similar tasks are used as exit exams to determine admission into upper-level courses, or as criteria for graduation, it becomes more urgent still. A mode of instruction must be found that allows students to develop their proficiencies

in constructing written arguments.

Part of the problem is curricular. Narrative predominates in the primary schools. Stotsky (5) states that 95% of the reading selections used in grades 1-8 in 1981 were narratives. Instead of stories, these students should be studying essays of the kind they will be expected to produce. They should focus on "editorials about current issues"(7). They ought to be exposed to prose models of persuasion.

It is not only the reading curriculum that needs drastic revision, but also the writing curriculum, according to Rose. The notion that personal topics are somehow easier to write and that instruction should begin with descriptive and narrative modes does students a disservice. They need practice in those genres on which academic achievment will be measured. Success in college depends upon the ability to organize information convincingly . The strategies for achieving these patterns should not be relegated to the end of a composition course.

The problems of teaching argumentation are also reflected in the composition textbooks. Not only do they reserve this as the last of the modes to be considered, but they also

tend to approach it negatively. They "emphasize warnings about where arguments fail" (Larson viii). It is easier to identify how argument goes wrong, than to define what enables it to succeed (Fenton 1). Students are warned about what they should avoid. One of the most popular composition texts ever published presents the ways in which persuasion can err:

> We have already covered the chief fallacies of the various kinds of syllogisms used in deductive logic. For the categorical syllogism, it is the fallacy of the shared characteristic or the undistributed middle term. For the hypothetical syllogism, it is the fallacy of denying the antecedent or affirming the consequent. For the alternative syllogism, it is the fallacy of insufficient options. The errors of generalizing from an insufficient sample or from a sample that is biased or not randomly selected might be called the formal fallacies of inductive reasoning. (Hairston 364).

Instead of such sophisticated strategies for deconstructing fallacious arguments, students need a practical method for constructing arguments of their own.

A Positive Instructional Approach

The most efficient way of teaching a complicated process like the construction of a well-formed argument is through a diagram. Such a map would show what the essential

parts of an argument are, and how they fit together. Repeated constructions of such argument maps allows students to internalize a schema for persuasive writing. Such practice permits students to form stable mental representations of well-formed arguments. These schema constitute plans they can follow in building their own argumentative essays. Boyle has shown teachers involved in the National Writing Project how mapping supplies the procedural knowledge needed for inventing, organizing, drafting, and evaluating compositions (199).

The Advantages of Holistic Approaches

Mapping out the structure of a text enables students to see the importance of adequate support. Because the map makes explicit the amount of substantiation required by a claim, students can assess for themselves whether they have offered sufficient evidence to convince a reader. If the map indicates that not enough data has been generated to garner conviction, students are impelled to research their topic further. It is the need to find compelling evidence that motivates them to read.

In contrast to developmental skills approaches, in which only the instructor has a global view, mapping lets students in on the whole picture from the outset. Instead of working on

discrete tasks which have been sequenced in order of difficulty, mapping begins with the whole. Students can proceed at their own pace, selecting whatever subtask they feel capable of performing without ever losing sight of their global aims. Since the map lets them monitor their results, students are less dependent upon directives, admonitions, direct instructions.

Procedural vs. Conceptual Learning

Even the best of the composition texts must begin with definitions of its terminology. Once the cogent terms (a defensible claim, kinds of proof, methods of development) have been explicated and exemplified, then the explanations can begin. Even if students comprehend the rhetorical concepts, they frequently have little idea of how to apply them.

Mapping, in contrast, simply depicts the structure of an argument. Whatever terminology is needed, is learned in use. Since familiarity with the procedures precedes the naming of them, students start out with a functional understanding of rhetorical principles. Cognitively speaking, in terms of Bloom's hierarchy, the applicative level is higher than the comprehension level. Mapping promotes pragmatic learning in the context of one's own writing

instead of abstract, decontextualized, conceptual learning.

A Brief History of the Map

The versatility of this particular text map is evident from the variety of uses it has served. Devised by Joseph Comprone to assist students in analyzing essays assigned for discussion, it was later adapted by Erika Lindemann as a prewriting device. Since 1983, my students have found it useful for planning, drafting, and evaluating argumentative essays.

FIGURE 1

From Joseph Comprone, *Teaching Form and Substance* (Dubuque, Ia.: Wm. C. Brown, 1976). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Procedures for Collaborative Map Construction

Students, working together in small groups, can assist each other in filling in outline maps. Through their discussions, they share strategies, they become aware of other options, and they make normally covert processes overt. Summarizing an article from a newsmagazine on a controversial issue is a way for students to apprehend the schema of argumentative prose. The first time through, each group can prepare one pie-shaped wedge. These are eventually assembled on the chalkboard and critiqued by the entire class. As students become more familiar with the mapping procedure, they can attempt longer passages cooperatively, working on prepared maps. By the second week, students can construct their own maps. Comparing their versions to a model chalked on the board by the teacher, they can help each other, in small groups, to fill in missing elements, or to excise extraneous elements. The collaboration allows them to pool resources which makes learning more effective.

Table 2 presents the procedure for summarizing an argument. The obligatory rereadings are an important part of its success.

Figure 2

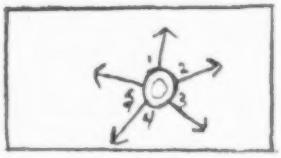
Constructing a Summary Map

1. Read the argument to find its central assertion, the claim that it seeks to prove, or the position it is defending.

2. Write this claim, in your own words, in a circle in the center of the page. This is the hub from which everything else radiates.

hub

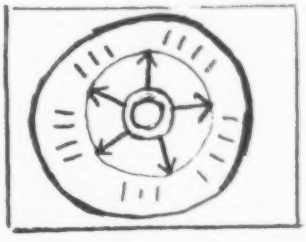
3. Skim the argument looking for the related subtopics into which the central idea, or thesis, has been divided. These serve as the topic spokes that support the claim. Write headings for each subtopic in a clockwise direction.



topic spokes

4. Skim each subtopic to find its supporting details. Look for facts, examples, statistics, data, citations, testimonials. List these substantiations in the rim.

rim



5. On this reading, look for <u>HOW</u> it is said.
On the rhetorical strategy spokes, list the mode of development used to present each subtopic.

The first three readings were for the semantic content (macrostructure). The final reading is to discover the organizational structure (superstructure). The search for the macrostructure begins with the superordinate idea (the thesis). Next, the subordinate ideas (topic spokes) are found. Finally, the corroborating evidence is sought (the supporting details). Once these have been hierarchically arranged, then attention can be turned to the modes of development, to how the material has been organized. Until students have figured out WHAT has been said, there is little profit in focusing on HOW it has been said.

Mapping succeeds in teaching the patterns for organizing information where ordinary composition texts fail. The usual

approach begins with a pattern. Students are asked to imitate this model. Such pedagogies assume that they are sophisticated enough as readers to discern the superstructure (organization). The reality is that unskilled readers require multiple passes through the information to sort out the semantic content first. It is not until they have a secure sense of the meaning of a passage that they can spare attention to how the discourse has been shaped rhetorically. Thus, reserving the discovery of organizational patterns as the final, culminating step in a series of readings, allows students to see these patterns as dynamic strategies instead of as static forms.

Apprehending the Schema of Argumentation

Weekly practice in constructing maps of argumentative essays allows students to gradually internalize the schema of written argument. During the introductory sessions, students fill out prepared maps distributed by the instructor. As they become more familiar with the map format, they begin to construct their own versions. At first, they work collaboratively on their summaries in class. As soon as they have extablished their competence in summarizing, they sustain their proficiency through a standing homework

assignment. Each week, they add at least one summary map to their portfolios. These serve as references for the essays they will compose. The task itself spurs them to read on controversial issues in newspapers and newsmagazines. The extensive independent reading not only builds up their background knowledge, but also keeps it upgraded. Furthermore, such focus on a single genre stabilizes their mental models of argumentative discourse so that they will have ready access to ways of producing argument essays of their own.

The first lesson plan aims at building text structure awareness. Taylor found that students could not produce adequate summaries because "they were unable to differentiate essential from peripheral information"(205). Map construction shows students explicitly how to separate the crucial ideas from the nonessential ones. Other researchers on summarization skills noted the tendency to string together discrete details without working through the logical interconnections. Haslett and Gaunt found that students listed "sets of isolated facts mentioned in the order of their appearance in the input text"(1). Hiebert, Englert, and Brennan found that students

"process text sequentially, in a list-like approach,without subsuming textual elements into meaningful hierarchical interrelationships"(76). Mapping counteracts the tendency to list by hierarchicalizing the information. The information is displayed in its order of importance: the most central ideas are in the center (hub); the most peripheral ideas are in the periphery (rim). The array itself reminds students to work from the core toward the circumference. Following the arrows on the topic spokes enables them to arrange the information in the order of its importance.

This sample lesson plan is for a 60-minute instructional period.

Minutes	Procedure for Teaching Text Structure
20	Students read an argumentative essay on a controversial issue to find claim, major supports.
15	Students write superordinate idea (position statement) in hub; subordinate ideas (on the topic spokes); and supporting details are written in the rim.
10	Students compare their versions with a model placed on the chalkboard by the instructor.
15	Working collaboratively in small groups, students help each other to fill in missing items, or to reposition misplaced items.

Collaborative mapping promotes the constant monitoring which is the characteristic of good summarizers according to Taylor. Successful summarizers "tended to check their work carefully and to monitor the original article to make sure they had been faithful to the author's intent"(203). Not a single student in the study by Garner, Belcher, Winfield, and Smith engaged in such an "ongoing comparison of text to summary"(151). The sample lesson plan which follows helps students to assess their summaries. By continually evaluating each others' work at each step in the process, they gradually internalize the standards.

The time-allotments are for a 60-minute instructional period. The procedures are for teaching students the criteria to be monitored in summarizing information.

Minutes	Procedures
15	Students generate summaries from the maps they constructed of the argumentative essays.
15	Working together in small groups, students check each other's summaries against the original text. Omissions of important ideas are marked.
15	Students revise their summaries until all essential information has been included.

5 Reconvening in small groups, students do word counts of each others' summaries.

5 The class reassembles to find out which group succeeded in reducing the text to the fewest words. The homework assignment is to consolidate the information into the briefest possible form

Mapping Composing Plans

A number of empirical studies have shown the benefits of using maps as prewriting techniques to students of all ages. Semantic mapping was successful with kindergarten children (Pehrsson and Robinson), with primary grades (Heimlich and Pettelman); in 3rd grade (McGee and Richgels); in 6th grade (Raphael and Kirschner; Berkowitz); in 7th grade (Taylor and Beach), in 8th grade (Armbruster and Anderson); and in 9th grade (Slater, Grave and Piche; Meyer, Brandt and Bluth). Experiments with college freshmen showed the advantages of organizing ideas on a map in advance of composing (Geva; Sinatra, Stahl-Gemake, and Morgan; Ruddel and Boyle; Horowitz; Carrell). Because mapping draws on the visual-spatial strengths, it has succeeded with verbally-impaired students such as the deaf (Long and Aldersley) and the dyslexic (Sinatra, Stahl-Gemake, and Berg).

In spite of the advantages claimed for this technique by all of these researchers, mapping has yet to be tried for argumentative essays. As McKeachie said: "evidence is lacking for the benefits of spatial strategies on interpretive, opinion, and persuasion essays"(308).

The work in mapping out story structures is even more extensive than that of expository structures. Newkirk has called for extensions of that research into argumentative structures :"story grammars need to be joined by...argument grammars"(196).

Comprone's wheel lets students experiment with the layout of their arguments. It allows them to test whether the reasons offered in defense of claims have been presented in a logical order, or whether a more effective arrangement might be found. It lets students monitor the adequacy of the data supplied as substantiation. If there is insufficient evidence in the rim, students realize they must research more facts to prove their claims before they begin composing. But, beyond promoting development and elaboration, the map also shows students how to anticipate and refute possible objections. The cycle of lesson plans that follows demonstrates these aspects.

Minutes	Formulating a Rebuttal
10	Students meet with partners who are assuming the opposite position on the same controversial issue. They take turns expressing their positions. Each selects his opponent's strongest point, noting it on a topic spoke as an anticipated objection.
5	From notes taken on the previous discussion, each partner articulates a refutation. This rebuttal is written on the next topic spoke.
20	Students partition their argument into subtopics, inscribing these in a phrase on the remaining topic spokes.
25	The instructor circulates around the classroom checking that designators on the topic spokes are parallel in form, and that they actually advance, instead of merely reiterating their assertions. Those students who have successfully self-corrected their composing plans assist in checking their classmates' maps.

Minutes	The Map as a Heuristic for Generating Supports
15	Students meet in small groups to discuss what sort of evidence they might use to convince a reader of the cogency of their claim.
20	Students work on filling the rims of their maps with ideas generated in the brainstorming session.
5	Reconvening in small groups, students count the number of supporting details supplied for each topic spoke. If fewer than 5 have been offered, they write : "Further research needed here."

30 Students consult available resources for more facts, statistics, examples, data, illustrations. They search their reference portfolios containing the arguments they have summarized for citations they might use. They consult newspaper clippings, or magazine articles, or interview someone with expertise on their topic.

Maps as Revision Prompts

Once a first draft has been completed, the rhetorical strategy spokes come into play. Comprone's wheel fosters the two types of revision recommended by Donald Murray. The first, or "internal revision" for getting one's meaning straight for the self is laid out on the composing plan. The second, or "external revision" is mapped out before the second draft. Its purpose is to shape the information so that it will be comprehensible to a reader. Since the aim of persuasive discourse is to convince a reader, it becomes crucial to find appropriate patterns. The topic spokes guided the writers in discovering what they wanted to say. Now the rhetorical strategy spokes enable the writer to discover how that content might be most effectively presented.

This two-stage mapping process reinforces the need for multiple drafts, delays audience considerations until students are ready to cope with them, motivates students

into a second pass through the material from a fresh perspective, and allows students to reinvent the modes for themselves.

Instead of spending most of the semester practicing such modes as process, cause and effect, comparison, contrast, definition, description, and waiting until the final weeks to learn about argumentation, students begin with argumentation, and discover the other forms of exposition on their own. Since persuasion employs all of the rhetorical strategies in its service, such a reversal of the usual curriculum makes good sense.

Using Maps as Feedback

The most tactful way of conducting a class discussion of a student's draft, is to map it, and xerox copies of this map for classmates to analyze. This focuses attention on the logical structure of the argument instead of on distracting surface errors. A map can delineate unsupported claims, irrelevancies, digressions with absolute clarity. A map can also convey the exemplary construction of a compelling argument.

Maps cam also serve as individual feedback. They are

the most objective form of evaluation possible. Maps can protect instructors against their inevitable tendencies to proofread papers. Responding to students' essays with maps specifying what rhetorical strategies they have devised, and what organization they have achieved is far more economical than extended commentary. It is also far more effective in motivating revisions than red-inking mistakes.

Because of their consistency, maps foster the internalization of assessment criteria. Students, working in peer-editing groups, can easily map out each other's drafts. For the purpose of spurring further revision, maps are superior to revision checklists in two ways. First, each map is an individualized response to the unique needs of a single author. Second, since maps are visual rather than verbal, they distance and objectify problems which writers know how to resolve.

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